

Amendments to the Specification:

Page 1, change the first paragraph to read as follows: --

The invention relates to a support frame for relieving the vertebral column in the trunk area between the hips and the thoracic vertebrae, comprising a hip clasp supported on the hips of the patient and a thoracic vertebrae clasp supported on the area of the thoracic vertebrae, which are connected with one another by means of support rods extending parallel to the vertebral column, whereby the distance between the hip clasp and the thoracic vertebrae clasp is adjustable in that the support rods that run parallel to the vertebral column are adjustable in length.--

Page 2, lines 7 to 9, amend this paragraph to read as follows: --

~~It is therefore the task of the invention to create a~~
Therefore, support frames of the type stated, which can be better adapted to the individual height of the patient, would be of advantage. --

Same page, lines 10 to 18, amend this paragraph to read as follows:--

~~The object of the invention is a support frame for relieving the vertebral column in the trunk area between the hips and the~~

~~thoracic vertebrae, comprising a hip clasp supported on the hips of the patient and a thoracic vertebrae clasp supported on the area of the thoracic vertebrae, which are connected with one another by means of support rods extending parallel to the vertebral column, whereby this support frame is characterized in that~~ This goal is basically obtainable by the distance between the hip clasps and the thoracic vertebrae clasp ~~is being~~ adjustable.--

Same page, after line 18, insert the following new paragraph: --

Devices having possibilities for adjusting the distance between the straps or braces that surround the upper body are fundamentally known, for example from U.S. 3,889,664 or U.S. 2,835,247. --

Same page, line 2 from below, to page 3, line 9, change the paragraph to read: --

~~The invention proceeds from the recognition that it~~ It is sufficient to adjust the distance between the hip clasp and the thoracic vertebrae clasp, in order to adapt the support frame to the height of the patient. In comparison, the hip clasp and the thoracic vertebrae clasp themselves can easily be adapted to different body shapes, particularly to the body circumference of

the patient, because of their deformability. Therefore the support frame according to the invention as a whole can easily be adapted to all the individual body dimensions and body shapes of the patient. It is therefore sufficient to keep only a few support frame sizes on hand in order to properly care for patients.--

Page 3, after line 9, insert the following new paragraphs:--

It is noted as a disadvantage of the support frames known from the state of the art that little attention has been paid to weaning until now. Up to the present, weaning after successful therapy took place, in most instances, simply by wearing the support frame over shorter periods of time. The task therefore exists of creating the possibility of weaning the patient from the orthosis step by step, until finally, the patient can live essentially without any means of relieving the vertebral column.

This task is accomplished, according to the invention, in that interchangeable reinforcement rods having a different thickness, a different stiffness, and/or a different length can be additionally inserted between the hip clasp and the thoracic vertebrae clasp. In this connection, the reinforcement rods are used in addition to the length-adjustable support rods that are rigidly connected with the hip clasp and the thoracic vertebrae

clasp, respectively. By means of these additional reinforcement rods, the support effect of the support frame can be reinforced, if necessary. Furthermore, there is the possibility of configuring the support frame to be stiffer or more flexible, by means of interchangeable reinforcement rods having a different thickness. In this way, it is possible to wean the patient from the orthosis in steps, by first using more rigid support rods, then more flexible ones.--

Same page, cancel the paragraph on lines 10-12 ("A first ... in length.").

Page 4, line 4 from below, to page 5, line 5, amend this paragraph to read as follows: --

~~Another advantageous embodiment of the support frame according to the invention provides that the support~~ The reinforcement rods that run parallel to the vertebral column can be releasably attached both to the hip clasp and to the thoracic vertebrae clasp, and can be replaced with ~~support~~ reinforcement rods having a different length and/or stiffness. The interchangeable ~~support~~ reinforcement rods can be fixed in place on the hip clasp, on the one hand, and on the thoracic vertebrae clasp, on the other hand, by means of hook and loop closures, snaps, adhesive connectors, hooks and eyes, or the like, for

example.--

Page 5, lines 6-18, amend this paragraph as follows:--

Preferably, however, it is provided that accommodation pockets are provided on the hip clasp, on the one hand, and on the thoracic vertebrae clasp, on the other hand, into which ~~support~~ reinforcement rods having different lengths can be inserted. In this case, of course, the ~~support~~ reinforcement rods are not an integral part of the hip clasp and the thoracic vertebrae clasp, respectively, but rather separate parts, separated from them. In this case, ~~support~~ reinforcement rods having different lengths must be kept on hand in order to adapt the support range of the support frame, and they must be selected in accordance with the body dimensions of the patient. Alternatively, the interchangeable ~~support~~ reinforcement rods can also be configured in such a manner that they can be shortened to the correct length, in each instance, using simple aids, for example a suitable cutting tool.--

Same page, line 19, to page 6, line 9, cancel the entire paragraph.

Page 6, lines 10-15, amend this paragraph to read: --

The ~~support~~ reinforcement rods can consist of a suitable

stiff plastic and/or of steel. Such ~~support~~ reinforcement rods, reinforced with steel or made entirely of steel, have a particularly great stiffness at low weight and small external dimensions. The latter is particularly important so that the support frame, which might be worn under the clothing, does not take up too much space.--

Page 7, lines 8 and 9, change this paragraph to read as follows:--

Figure 2: A support frame according to the invention, in a second exemplary embodiment[;]_

Same page, cancel the paragraph on lines 10 and 11 ("Figure 3...third exemplary embodiment").

Page 8, lines 5-13, amend this paragraph to read as follows:--

For additional reinforcement or, if necessary, as a substitute for the aforementioned support rods 3, interchangeable ~~support~~ reinforcement rods 5 are additionally provided, which can consist of steel, for example, and can be inserted into accommodation pockets 6 that are located on the hip clasp 1, on the one hand, and on the thoracic vertebrae clasp 2, on the other hand. The interchangeable ~~support~~ reinforcement rods 5 can also

be attached to the hip clasp 1, on the one hand, and to the thoracic vertebrae clasp 2, on the other hand, by means of other releasable means of attachment, if necessary.--

Page 8, line 19, to page 9, line 12, cancel the entire paragraph.

Page 9, lines 13-19, amend this paragraph as follows: --

In the case of the exemplary embodiment according to Figure 3 2, in which the interchangeable reinforcement rods 5 that belong to the invention are not shown in the drawing, the support rod sections 3a and 3b that are connected, in one piece, with the hip clasp 1 and the thoracic vertebrae clamp 2, respectively, are guided on one another in telescoping manner and can be fixed to one another at different extension lengths. The latter, in the case of this embodiment, takes place by means of the hole/plug connection indicated as 8. --